

Sodium in Your Diet

Use the Nutrition Facts Label and Reduce Your Intake



Nutrition Facts	
4 servings per container	
Serving size 1 1/2 cup (208g)	
Amount per serving	% Daily Value*
Calories	240
Total Fat 4g	8%
Saturated Fat 1.5g	3%
Trans Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 5mg	1%
Sodium 430mg	19%
Total Carbohydrate 46g	25%
Dietary Fiber 7g	14%
Total Sugars 4g	8%
Includes 2g Added Sugars	4%
Protein 11g	22%
Vitamin D 2mcg	40%
Calcium 260mg	52%
Iron 6mg	108%
Potassium 240mg	48%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

You've probably heard that most Americans eat too much sodium. Your body needs a small amount of sodium to work properly, but too much sodium can be bad for your health. According to the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, diets higher in sodium are associated with an **increased risk of developing high blood pressure, which is a major cause of stroke and heart disease.**

Despite what many people think, most dietary sodium (over 70%) comes from eating **packaged and prepared foods**—not from salt added to food when cooking or eating. The food supply contains too much sodium and Americans who want to consume less sodium can have a difficult time doing so. That is why the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is working with the food industry to make reasonable reductions in sodium across a wide variety of foods. Even though sodium may already be in many packaged foods when you purchase them, you can **lower your daily sodium intake by using the Nutrition Facts label.**

Look at the Label

Use the Nutrition Facts label as your tool to make informed decisions!

- **Know the Daily Value.** The Daily Values are reference amounts of nutrients to consume or not to exceed each day. **The Daily Value for sodium is less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) per day.**
- **Use % Daily Value (%DV) as a tool.** The %DV is the percentage of the Daily Value for each nutrient in a serving of the food and shows how much of a nutrient contributes to a total daily diet.

Use %DV to determine if a serving of the food is high or low in sodium and to compare and choose foods to **get less than 100% DV of sodium each day.**

As a general guide: **5% DV or less of sodium per serving is considered low, and 20% DV or more of sodium per serving is considered high.**

- **Pay attention to servings.** The nutrition information listed on the Nutrition Facts label is usually based on one serving of the food. **Check the serving size and the number of servings you eat or drink to determine how much sodium you are consuming.**

Food Choices Matter!

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), **about half of the sodium consumed by Americans comes from the following foods:**

- Breads and rolls
- Pizza
- Sandwiches (such as hamburgers, hot dogs, and submarine sandwiches)
- Cold cuts and cured meats (such as deli and packaged ham and turkey)
- Soups
- Burritos and tacos
- Snack foods (such as chips, crackers, microwave popcorn, and pretzels)
- Chicken (includes processed chicken)
- Cheese (includes processed cheese)
- Egg dishes and omelets

But remember, the sodium content can vary significantly between similar types of foods. So, use the Nutrition Facts label to compare products, and don't forget to check the serving size in order to make an accurate comparison.

Salt and Sodium: Defined

The words "salt" and "sodium" are often used interchangeably, but they do not mean the same thing. Salt (also known by its chemical name, sodium chloride) is a crystal-like compound that is abundant in nature. Sodium is a mineral, and one of the chemical elements found in salt.



Sodium as a Food Ingredient

As a food ingredient, sodium has multiple uses, such as for curing meat, baking, thickening, retaining moisture, enhancing flavor (including the flavor of other ingredients), and as a preservative. Some common food additives—like monosodium glutamate (MSG), sodium bicarbonate (baking soda), sodium nitrite, and sodium benzoate—also contain sodium and contribute (in lesser amounts) to the total amount of "sodium" listed on the Nutrition Facts label.

Surprisingly, some foods that don't taste salty can still be high in sodium, which is why using taste alone is not an accurate way to judge a food's sodium content. For example, while some foods that are high in sodium (like pickles and soy sauce) *taste* salty, there are also many foods (like cereals and pastries) that contain sodium but *don't* taste salty. Also, some foods that you may eat several times a day (such as breads) can add up to a lot of sodium over the course of a day, even though an individual serving may not be high in sodium.

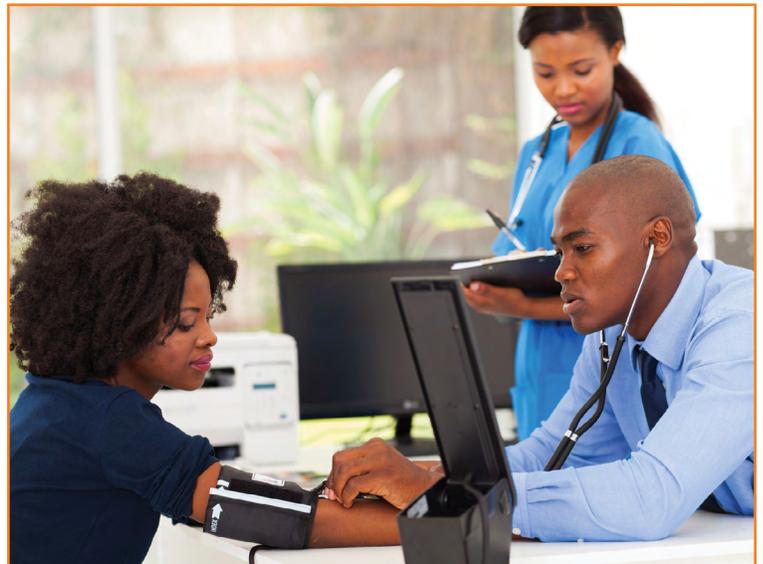
Check the Package for Nutrient Claims

You can also check for nutrient claims on food and beverage packages to quickly identify those that may contain less sodium. Here's a guide to common claims and what they mean:

What It Says	What It Means
Salt/Sodium-Free	Less than 5 mg of sodium per serving
Very Low Sodium	35 mg of sodium or less per serving
Low Sodium	140 mg of sodium or less per serving
Reduced Sodium	At least 25% less sodium than the regular product
Light in Sodium or Lightly Salted	At least 50% less sodium than the regular product
No-Salt-Added or Unsalted	No salt is added during processing – but these products may not be salt/sodium-free unless stated

Sodium and Blood Pressure

Sodium attracts water, and a high-sodium diet draws water into the bloodstream, which can increase the volume of blood and subsequently your blood pressure. **High blood pressure** (also known as **hypertension**) is a condition in which blood pressure remains elevated over time. Hypertension makes the heart work too hard, and the high force of the blood flow can harm arteries and organs (such as the heart, kidneys, brain, and eyes). Uncontrolled high blood pressure can raise the risk of heart attack, heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, and blindness. In addition, blood pressure generally rises as you get older, so limiting your sodium intake becomes even more important each year.



Know Your Numbers

Sodium is an essential nutrient and is needed by the body in relatively small amounts (provided that substantial sweating does not occur) to maintain a balance of body fluids and keep muscles and nerves running smoothly. However, most Americans eat too much of it—and they may not even know it.

Americans eat on average about 3,400 mg of sodium per day. However, the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends limiting sodium intake to **less than 2,300 mg per day**—that's equal to about **1 teaspoon of salt!**



10 Easy Tips for Reducing Sodium Consumption

Learning about sodium in foods and exploring new ways to prepare foods can help you achieve your sodium goal. And, if you follow these tips to reduce the amount of sodium you consume, your “taste” for sodium will gradually decrease over time—so eventually, you may not even miss it!

1 Read the Nutrition Facts label

Compare and choose foods to get less than 100% DV (less than 2,300 mg) of sodium each day.

2 Prepare your own food when you can

Limit packaged sauces, mixes, and “instant” products (including flavored rice, instant noodles, and ready-made pasta).

3 Add flavor without adding sodium

Limit the amount of salt you add to foods when cooking, baking, or at the table. Try no-salt seasoning blends and herbs and spices instead of salt to add flavor to your food.

4 Buy fresh

Choose fresh meat, poultry, and seafood, rather than processed varieties. Also, check the package on fresh meat and poultry to see if salt water or saline has been added.

5 Watch your veggies

Buy fresh, frozen (no sauce or seasoning), or low sodium or no-salt-added canned vegetables.

6 Give sodium the “rinse”

Rinse sodium-containing canned foods, such as beans, tuna, and vegetables before eating. This removes some of the sodium.

7 “Unsalt” your snacks

Choose low sodium or no-salt-added nuts, seeds, and snack products (such as chips and pretzels)—or have carrot or celery sticks instead.

8 Consider your condiments

Sodium in condiments can add up. Choose light or reduced sodium condiments, add oil and vinegar to salads rather than bottled dressings, and use only a small amount of seasoning from flavoring packets instead of the entire packet.

9 Reduce your portion size

Less food means less sodium. Prepare smaller portions at home and consume less when eating out—choose smaller sizes, split an entrée with a friend, or take home part of your meal.

10 Make lower-sodium choices at restaurants

Ask for your meal to be prepared without salt and request that sauces and salad dressings be served “on the side,” then use less of them. You can also ask if nutrition information is available and then choose options that are lower in sodium.